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ABSTRACT

Through the Innovative Approaches Research Project (IARP), four research and demonstration projects are being implemented as part of a single research effort in the following topic areas: (1) dropout prevention, (2) literacy instruction, (3) math and science instruction, and (4) education of exceptional limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. The goals of the research and demonstration projects are to determine effective approaches for instructing LEP students and to document the innovations that are found to be most useful in order to make it possible for educators to replicate them in a variety of settings. Each project is based on a broad research base, including current findings on cognitive development and learning as well as findings on second language learning and on cultural factors that affect classroom learning. In the next two years a major goal of the IARP is to make the findings of the four IARP research and demonstration projects visible to educators generally, and more specifically to educators who are currently teaching/working with LEP students. (RAE)

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THE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES RESEARCH PROJECT: EMPLOYING RESEARCH FINDINGS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

by Charlene Rivera, Ed.D. • IARP Project Director
Development Associates, Inc. • Management and Governmental Consultants

Editor's Note: The problem of school dropouts has, in recent years, become a critical concern to policy makers at the Federal, state, and local levels. It is estimated that between 290,000 and 325,000 female youths and between 325,000 and 375,000 males drop out of school each year. In addition, there are about 2.1 million females and 2.3 million males between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not enrolled in high school and have not completed high school. Although there has been extensive research on the problem of school dropouts, much research has focused on the scope of the problem, rather than on potential solutions. From the many recent studies examining different strategies for serving dropout-prone youth, the following question was consistently presented: How can instruction of limited-English-proficient students be improved in America's schools? That is the central question for which a current research and demonstration project, the Innovative Approaches Research Project (IARP), is now seeking answers. The project, though, goes beyond seeking answers. After completion of four, two-year, in-school research and demonstration projects, IARP's second stage is to ensure that the research advances find practical applications in the nation's classrooms. This article describes how the IARP will be applying its findings.

Schools throughout the United States are facing the growing challenge of providing effective instruction to the increasing numbers of students with a language other than English as their native tongue. In response to the special educational challenges posed by students from limited-English-proficient (LEP) backgrounds, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) funded the Innovative Approaches Research Project (IARP) and selected Development Associates, Inc., a governmental management and consulting firm, to administer the project. Development Associates IARP Project Staff includes: Dr. Charlene Rivera, Project Director; Dr. Paul J. Hopstock, Acting Associate Director; and Richard Ottman, Contracts Administrator.

> *The goals . . . are to determine effective approaches for instructing LEP students and to document the innovations that are found to be effective in order to make it possible for educators to replicate them in a variety of settings.*

Through IARP, four research and demonstration projects are being implemented as part of a single research effort in the following topic areas: (1) dropout prevention, (2) literacy instruction, (3) math and science instruction, and (4) education of exceptional LEP students. The goals of the research and demonstration projects, which are firmly rooted both in the research literature and in the practicalities of implementing the intervention in classroom settings, are to determine effective approaches for instructing LEP students and to document the innovations that are found to be effective in order to make it possible for educators to replicate them in a variety of settings. Each project is based on a broad research base, including current findings on cognitive development and learning as well as findings on second language learning and on cultural factors that affect classroom learning.

From the hundreds of individuals that expressed interest in conducting research in the designated topic areas, three projects have been selected to implement their projects under the IARP. The fourth project, in the exceptional student category, will be announced at the end of the summer. Upon completion of the projects in July of 1990, a technical report in which the researchers describe the related research literature, the research design, and the

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PROJECT -- *continued from page one*

findings of the project will be one major IARP product. The other major product, translating the research for practical application in the classroom, will be a handbook which can be used by educators to replicate each of the innovative models or their component parts.

Dropout Prevention

"Partners in Education: A Cross-Age Tutoring Model for LEP Students at Risk for Dropping Out" is the title of the dropout prevention research and demonstration project that is being implemented by the **Intercultural Development Research Association** (IDRA) of San Antonio, Texas. In order to increase students' motivation for continuing in school and to assist students in setting goals that make continued attendance in school meaningful to them, the project incorporates the following main objectives: increasing student positive affect regarding the self and school, enhancing student basic academic skill levels, decreasing student truancy and disciplinary referrals, and forming school-home-community partnerships to provide additional support to the students.

The model is comprised of six components: (1) Cross-age tutoring, in which students who are at-risk of dropping out are employed as tutors for elementary school students; (2) Classes for the student tutors, in which the tutors are provided with guidance and background instruction related to their tutoring; (3) Field trips in which the students (tutors and their tutees) are exposed to economic and cultural opportunities in the broader community; (4) Student recognition through award events in which all tutors are given special recognition for fulfilling their responsibilities as tutors; (5) Role modeling, in which successful Hispanic adults will speak to students regarding their careers; and, (6) Parent involvement, in which parents will be informed about the program, encouraged to support their child's involvement, and be given guidance as to how they can provide more specific assistance that will support their child's efforts toward completing high school.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed to assess differences in dropout rates for the 100 Hispanic LEP students in grades six through eight participating in peer tutoring in comparison with students not involved in the project. The sites for the study are schools within two school districts (Harlandale ISD and South San Antonio ISD), with students selected from two middle schools in each district.

The Intercultural Development Research Association staff involved with this project consist of: Dr. María del Refugio Robledo, Project Director; Dr. Alicia Salinas Sosa, Project Associate; and Aurelio M. Montemayor. The Continuing Reviewer of the project is Dr. Aaron Pallas of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences at Columbia University's Teachers College.

Literacy Instruction

"Community Knowledge and Classroom Practice: Combing Resources for Literacy Instruction" is the title of the IARP research and demonstration project focused on literacy instruction. The University of Arizona's College of Education together with the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology is implementing this project.

The main objective of this project is the development of innovative approaches to literacy instruction that are culturally and linguistically compatible with the background of LEP students from specific minority groups. The development of the instructional approaches is based on three main interrelated project activities: (1) An ethnographic analysis of the transmission of knowledge and skills and of the nature of literacy activities within the home environment of the students; (2) Implementation of an "after-school lab" where researchers and teachers will use the ethnographic information to experiment with literacy instruction; and (3) Implementation of the effective literacy instructional methods identified through the lab school in a formal classroom setting.

Students are expected to show improvement in literacy skills and in academic performance as a result of participating in the project. The project will result in a handbook detailing activities for literacy instruction that present meaningful tasks to the students and which are relevant to the students' own background. In addition, the handbook will describe how the "after school lab" might be used in other schools in order to further define effective activities for literacy instruction relevant to other groups of students.

PROJECT -- *continued on page three*

THE INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (IDRA)

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PROJECT – *continued from page two*

The project's ethnographic analysis involves 30 fourth to sixth grade LEP students. The research is designed to identify ethnographic information with potential utility in developing approaches to literacy instruction that are culturally and linguistically compatible with the background and experience of LEP students from specific minority groups (primarily Mexican-American). In an after-school lab setting, researchers and teachers will test these approaches on 15-20 students. Counting the final implementation stage in year two, a total of 270 students, primarily Mexican-American, will participate in the project.

The University of Arizona staff involved with this project are: Dr. Luis C. Moll of the College of Education as Principal Investigator, and, as Co-Principal Investigators, Dr. Carlos Velez-Ibanez and Dr. James Greenberg of the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology. The project's Continuing Reviewer is Dr. Margaret Steffensen of the Illinois State University's Department of English.

. . . the IARP research effort offers a unique opportunity to examine commonalities in effective instruction for LEP students across the projects, while at the same time examing innovative approaches specific to each of the four topic areas.

Math & Science Instruction

"Cheche Konnen: An Investigation-Based Approach to Teaching Scientific Inquiry to Limited-English-Proficient Students" is the title of the IARP's math and science instruction research project that BBN Laboratories, Inc., of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is implementing. The title, "Cheche Konnen," means "search in the world and you will find." It describes the investigation-based approach being implemented. The goal of the approach is to increase students' scientific knowledge and understanding through collaborative instructional activities that involve them in the kind of scientific inquiry processes that characterize the work of practicing scientists. In these activities the students define problems, generate test hypotheses, analyze and interpret data and present results. Through these investigations, students will come to understand the purposes, concepts and methods of scientific inquiry and how these are linked in actual practice.

The project has two main objectives: First, the project seeks to help LEP students to learn and understand scientific concepts, processes, methods and facts through: (a) activities in which they experience science as intrinsically interesting, and valuable, and in which problem-solving involves a coherent set of linked activities, and (b) activities in which students use the skills, concepts, and tools of scientific inquiry to solve realistic problems. The second main objective of the project is to enable bilingual educators to implement and adapt the investigation-based approach to their classrooms. The products of the project will be a set of investigation-based model activities, a teacher's handbook providing both specific information on implementation of the approach as well as important scientific background information for teachers, a training plan for helping teachers use the investigation-based approach, and videotape materials that will support implementation and replication of the approach.

As part of the research phase of the study, both qualitative and quantitative data are being collected and analyzed to document the effects of the innovation on students and teachers. The project's research and implementation sites are the bilingual programs in two public schools in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The student participants are middle school and high school LEP students. The study participants are primarily Haitian students.

The BBN Laboratories staff involved in this project are: Dr. Bertram C. Bruce and Dr. Beth M. Warren, the Co-Principal Investigators; and Dr. Ann S. Roseberry, Instructional Scientist. The project's Continuing Reviewer is Dr. Jose P. Mestre of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

In conclusion, the IARP research effort offers a unique opportunity to examine commonalities in effective instruction for LEP students across the projects, while at the same time examining innovative approaches specific to each of the four topic areas. In the next two years a major goal of the IARP is to make the findings of the four IARP research and demonstration projects visible to educators generally and, more specifically, to educators who are currently teaching/working with LEP students. Toward this end, the IARP researchers will have opportunities to interact with one another and to share research findings with other researchers and educators who are working in related topic areas at conferences and at two IARP Symposia to be held in June 1989 and June 1990. An important goal of these interactions will be not only to promote awareness of the ongoing IARP research projects, but to invite comments and contributions from others on the research while in progress and to establish vital linkages between the IARP and those researchers, educators, and policymakers with interest in the outcomes of the IARP. Inquiries about the IARP can be made to Dr. Charlene Rivera, Development Associates, 2924 Columbia Pike, Arlington, VA 22204-4399, telephone: (703) 979-0100. ◊

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